Highland

FIRST CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

Seventy-five Years of History

1908 - 1983

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INDIANA COLLECTION
Highland -- Churches

By

Henry Bakker

INTRODUCTION

The compiler of this history was in his infancy at the time of the organization of our church. However, his grandparents, paternal and maternal with several uncles and aunts, were charter members.

When our family moved to Highland from Munster in the spring of 1913, we lived close to the church and parsonage. We lived so close, in fact, that we boys would stand on the landing at the top of the stairway in our house and through an open window aim our beebee guns at the church bell and hear the resounding "ping" when the beebee struck. We were close to the scene of action and heard much of what went on. The early days left a vivid impression.

Interest in the past was revived after having read once again the summary of the first fifty years as recorded by Prof. Henry Van Til. Visits with old friends which included Jake Auwerda and Bart Zandstra who have almost complete recall of what happened in those early days also stimulated interest in the history of our church.

The events of the last twenty five years are still fresh in mind. When we use the phrase "we remember", it implies what my contemporaries and I remember in retracing our steps down memory lane. This seems to be a pleasurable pursuit for older people. We feel that an anniversary is a time to reminisce as well as to celebrate.

Henry Bakker

THE BEGINNING

The history of our church is linked with the Christian Reformed Church of Munster. The majority of the charter members came from the Munster congregation. We remember being told that a small vacant church in Highland was rented with the purpose of having a meeting place for the young people in this area. Here a local committee was formed for the promotion of Christian instruction. In 1907 catechism classes were conducted by Rev. W. Borgman of Munster for the Highland children.

Having a meeting place was an asset in establishing a church. The most direct route to the Munster Church was via Ridge Road which at that time was only a narrow dirt path. It was often impossible to travel with horse and buggy. Our devout forebears were accustomed to attend services twice on Sunday. The crowded condition in the Munster Church gave impetus to the movement of organizing a church in Highland.

Early in 1908 the Highland group, discussing the

matter with the Munster consistory, decided to delegate two of their young men, Rommert Hoekstra and Reinder Van Til, to petition Classis Illinois for permission to organize a church. This request was granted, and our church was formally organized on April 28, 1908.

On this occasion Rev. B. Einink representing Classis spoke on I Cor. 15:58, "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord".

The membership of the new congregation consisted of thirty-seven families and three individuals. We consider them heroes of faith. Comparing their lot with our affluent society, the difficulties confronting them and the hardships they endured, one marvels at what they accomplished with the little they had.

The first office bearers were Homer De Jong, John Moes, and Ite Van Til as elders. The deacons

were Gerrit Eriks, Klaas Kortenhoeven, and Duurt Vander Wall.

Highland at that time was a mere hamlet with a population of a few hundred. It was criss-crossed with railroads, having stations on Kennedy and Highland Avenues. This gave promise for growth. Taking a backward look, it was surprising to see so much industry in such a small town.

We remember the Libby-McNeil tomato and pickle factory located south of the present Highland library. There was a brick yard in the sand pit near the site of our church of today. There were two grocery stores within the town square. With all the business going on, the Highland bank soon made its appearance. As children, we had our shoes repaired by Mr. Moes in his shoe shop which was located in a room of his house on Jewett St. We loved to watch Jake Kikkert shoe horses in Uncle John Kortenhoeven's smithy on Kennedy Ave. while the blows of his hammer made the ring of his anvil reverberate through the town.

Most of the early church members were truck

farmers who sold their produce to the cities north of Highland. Some contracted the raising of sugar beets for the Holland Sugar Beet Co. and later grew cabbage for Herman Meeter's Krout Shed.

In 1908 the new congregation bought the little church previously mentioned with the adjoining house from the Schoon family. This building, located on Jewett St. on a site west of the present Highland library, played an important part in the history of our church and school. It was built by Gerbrand Kooy, a well known carpenter, in 1891 at the behest of his father-in-law, Jacob Schoon, patriarch of the Schoon family who held its membership in the First Reformed Church in Lansing.

Jacob Schoon left the Lansing church for a time to establish one of his own in Highland. The Schoons lived in Ross, and Highland was much closer. Perhaps another reason for establishing a new church was the fact that the Lansing church began experimenting with the English language. We know that in the Schoon building the services were entirely in Dutch and only

psalms were sung. For our people at that time there was only one distinction in the religious world. It was either a Dutch church or an English church. The church was filled with Schoons, Koedykers, and Kooys and their friends and neighbors.

This building was closed when they could no longer procure a minister. Our people bought the property for $700.00. Before this they paid a rental of $12.00 per year for its use. This was the temporary church in which the new congregation worshipped and held their meetings from May to October in 1908. In November, 1909, the doors of this little building were opened as a school for Christian instruction.

Many week-day meetings had been held in this church. The decisions made at these meetings were acted upon almost immediately. Land was bought from Mr. Burns for the building of a new church. The site chosen was the location where the Calumet National Bank is now. Most of the town square bordered by Highway Ave. and Jewett St., Kennedy Ave. and 5th St. was owned

by Mr. Burns. Much of the other area was railroad property.

The contract for building the new church was given to J. Brandsma & Sons for the sum of $3,878.00. The congregation committed itself to pay the cost of the building over a period of five years at 5% interest. This was decided upon in May, 1908, and already in October of that year the first worship service was held in this building and in November the new church was dedicated.

The church was a frame building sixty feet long, forty two feet wide, and eighteen feet high. We remember "going up with the multitude" as the psalmist expresses it, negotiating the high steps into the church and observing the custodian tolling the bell calling the faithful to worship.

In the middle of the center aisle of the church an iron grating was placed over an open furnace in which fiery red embers could be seen in the winter time. As people walked over the grating, the "clonk, clonk" echoed through the church. We as children

often wondered what would happen if the grating should ever give way and drop into the fire. The grating was the only register for heat. Depending on where one sat, one either roasted or froze. Muffs and heated bricks were used for comfort.

After everyone was seated on the chairs, the air was redolent with the aroma of leather, peppermints and cologne. Air conditioning was supplied by the janitor wielding a long pole with a hook on the end which he inserted into a slot in the transom above the windows to open them on their hinges.

The minister with the consistory came in through the side door. Before ascending the platform, the minister would pause and bow his head for a moment in silent prayer. The elders sat on the side benches to the right of the pulpit and the deacons on the left. A railing surrounded the platform to keep the man in the pulpit in the right perspective.

An air organ accompanied the singing. Pumper boys recruited from the young men of the congregation took turns in cranking air into the bellows of the organ.

The organists in the early days were Hans and Cornelius Eriks, Fred Fennema, and Miss Maggie Zyp.

In the summer we youngsters were sometimes distracted when birds flying through the open doors and windows would perch on the bars which extended across the church ceiling. We made certain that the deacons collected our two pennies as they wielded their long poles with black pouches attached to them. We remember how at the close of the service the elders would meet the minister as he descended from the pulpit to show their approval of the sermon by shaking hands.

The dedication service of the new church was not entirely in Dutch. One of the officiating ministers spoke in English. The Dutch version of Ps. 68 was sung. The English translation is, "Let God be praised with reverence deep; He daily comes our lives to steep, In bounties freely given."

The early church, not having a pastor, was fortunate to have as counselor Rev. W. Borgman, a man of deep piety and a strong advocate of Christian

education. Among the pastors who ministered to the flock during these days were the Revs. B. Einink, K. Kuiper, G. D. Haan, and W. Stuart. When no minister was available, reading services were held. One of the elders would read a sermon from a book of sermons.

The new congregation wished to have a shepherd of its own. A lot adjoining the church had been bought, and a parsonage was built. Frank Porter and John Eriks along with the consistory were the building committee. A call was extended to Rev. J. Byleveld who gladdened the congregation with the announcement of his acceptance. The new pastor was installed in January, 1909. Rev. W. Borgman addressed the new minister and congregation with the text from II Timothy 4:2, "Preach the word: be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with great patience and instruction". To the congregation it seemed as if Paul was speaking to his spiritual son, Timothy. The members realized that these words were applicable to them, too, for they well knew that they had not by any means obtained perfection.

Shortly thereafter, acreage was bought from Peter Zyp for a burial ground which is the present Hope Cemetery. Also a Young Men's and Young Women's Society was organized. The church had become the social as well as the religious center for its members.

The pastor's salary was $700.00 a year. When the Christian school was opened in November, 1909, the janitor who was custodian of both church and school received a salary of $200.00 a year. The congregation loaned Rev. Byleveld a horse and buggy to visit the members of the church. It took strong horses to pull the vehicle through the mud of the hinterland.

Rev. Byleveld accepted a call from New Holland, South Dakota, in 1913 and left us in early summer. After a few calls and declinations, Candidate Zacharius Sherda agreed to become our next pastor.

Rev. Sherda had a Crow-Elkart automobile. In 1911 Ridge Road had been widened and gravelled. Road crews were active in and around Highland to improve conditions for travel. In 1914 the Men's Society was organized, and in November of that year the Ladies Aid Society was organized to give financial aid to our Christian School.

Mr. Anthony De Groot, Sr., teacher in the Christian school, was song director for our young people. As the shadows lengthen for many of us, we recall how they sang, "Some day the silver chord will break". Mr. De Groot also conducted the band which on one Fourth of July travelled to Hammond and from there to Gary playing patriotic numbers on a platform wagon drawn by horses.

There was a steady growth of membership in our church at this time. However, in 1916 many of our members migrated to Montana. Our people had resided in their respective provinces in the Netherlands for generations but when they came to America, the open

spaces beckoned. After a few years, Frisians, Groningers, North Hollanders, and others soon lost their provincialism. People who had helped establish homes, churches, and schools in this area were only too eager to go through this process again. The lure of cheap land and of adventure drew them. They were a hardy race. They chose to go north rather than to the balmy south. Rev. Sherda in later years, revisiting his first pastorate, called the exodus of these people the "Great Trek".

In July, 1916, Rev. Sherda left us for Evergreen Park, Illinois. During this vacancy, several calls were extended and declined, among them Rev. Borgman. The guest ministers and students usually came by train and stayed at our house since the Erie station was only two clocks away. We children would meet the train on Saturday and help carry the suitcases.

In the early part of this century one could travel by train to almost any part of the country. Names of railroads were household words to us. With the advent of the Studebaker, Willys-Overland,

Stanley Steamer, Ford, and other makes of cars and later the trailer trucks, the railroads eventually lost out. The older generation often looks back with nostalgia to the time when all one had to do was to be cautious in crossing railroad tracks.

One Sunday our guest minister was Rev. J. B. Jonkman. He was accompanied by his daughter, Miss Jeanette Jonkman, who held a position in Chicago. Miss Jonkman was a fine musician and since Mr. De Groot had also left us, Miss Jonkman was prevailed upon to conduct the choir. She contributed much to the quality of music in our circle. It was no problem for her to commute from Chicago by train.

A Mr. Hutchins from Griffith became band director. His life long career had begun as a drummer boy during the Civil War. Evidently the band had done so well under the directorship of Mr. De Groot that Mr. Hutchins asserted that one of the members, Max Scheeringa, was the best cornet player he had ever met.

Rev. Memmo De Boer filled our vacancy in the spring of 1917. In that year our church, in cooperation with the Munster and South Holland churches, began a mission project which later was called the Hammond Mission. Mr. Garret Ellens, a faithful missionary, held services in a vacant store building in Hammond. This was the beginning of the Hammond Christian Reformed Church which was organized in 1959.

Rev. De Boer's stay with us was of short duration, but it was filled with drama. He was a fiery preacher. If the saints of yesteryear had any idea of their goodness, he soon reminded them of their utter sinfulness.

At this time our country became involved in World War I. The military draft claimed eight of our young men. We remember one time when the minister, whose temper had a low boiling point but who was essentially a soft hearted man, was overcome with emotion and could no longer continue during the worship service when he addressed one of the young

men who was to depart for military service. One of the elders immediately stepped forward and requested the congregation to sing Ps. 121:4. The English translation of this Psalm reads:

"From evil shall He keep thy soul,
From every sin.
Jehovah shall preserve thy going out,
Thy coming in.
Above thee watching, He whom we adore
Shall keep thee henceforth, yea, forevermore."

The armistice was signed November 11, 1918. All of our young men returned home, but at this time the whole world suffered from the terrible Spanish influenza. Many of our congregation were afflicted, and several died. One of our families lost a son and daughter in the prime of life. Another family lost a mother leaving eleven children. We remember Rev. De Boer bursting into tears when he announced that a member of his household had also died. These surely were days of heart break and sorrow.

Rev. De Boer left in the early part of 1920. Rev. D. G. De Jong became our pastor in August, 1920. At this time the minister's salary was increased to $1700.00. In 1922, pews were installed at the cost

of $1835.56. Happily the budget system had been previously introduced. Otherwise one would wonder where all the money was to come from.

Through the efforts of the Young People's Society, the hand pumped organ was replaced with a pipe organ in 1923. In catechism our pastor urged us to be active participants in the promotion of Christ's kingdom on earth. Our young people, led by Mr. Ellens, regularly gathered on the street corners in Hammond to bring the Good News in word and song. The singing was accompanied by the playing of a portable organ. This organ was also used in periodic visits to the county jail.

In the summer of 1925 Rev. De Jong retired from active service because of physical disability. Rev. J. A. Rottier accepted our call, and we welcomed him as our pastor in the beginning of 1926. At this time it was still customary for the minister to contact all the members annually in family visits. With all of his other work, this made the life of a minister a busy one. Changes were taking place in

the church. English was gradually replacing the Dutch in our worship services. We now had English in the morning and Dutch in the afternoon. The Young People's Society met Sunday evening.

The changing times also brought about the removal of the old horse barn. The barn had been a veritable gymnasium for the school children. It was located between the church and the school and was used as an outlet of energy by the children in inclement weather. It was not meant for that purpose, but in our day we soon learned to improvise and make use of whatever means we had at our disposal.

These were also days of prosperity. To serve a greater population, plans were made for the development of Highland and its environs. It seemed as if we had entered an age of Utopia. Sad to say, during these days of high prosperity, the things pertaining to spiritual matters were often overlooked.

The change was sudden. The stock market crash in 1929 brought on the Great Depression, and this also affected the life of the church. These were trying

times for the pastor and consistory. The experience, however, was not all bad because people began to take a more serious interest in what went on in church and state. Mr. J. P. Van Amstel, the new school principal, took the lead to promote necessary and interesting activities. In 1930 the Men's Society was reorganized. The society became an open forum, and men passing through Highland on visits and business made it a point to attend.

As early as 1908 one of the charter members had been appointed to be the first Sunday School teacher, but it was not until 1931 that the Sunday School was reorganized with a complete staff of teachers. In 1932 the Ladies Study Club was organized, and in 1933 the band was reorganized.

Meanwhile, Rev. Rottier was emeritated in 1931 because of ill health, and Dr. Martin Van Dyke was installed as pastor that same year. In 1933 the Silver Anniversary of the church was celebrated, and at that time there were 116 families with a total of 640 members.

Because of increased membership in the following years, it was decided to buy a new location for an enlarged church. The site chosen was a few lots farther east. A basement was built, and the church was moved to its new foundation and enlarged. One of our families offered to defray the cost of another pipe organ, and this offer was gratefully accepted. In January, 1940, the enlarged church was dedicated, and Dr. Cornelius Van Til gave the main address entitled, "Pillars of the Church".

OUTREACH

With our country's entry into World War II after the attack on Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, fortyeight of our members were in the armed forces. This gave much concern, and many prayer meetings were held and entreaties made to God for peace. We remember the special services and meetings that were held in which thanks was given to God when the war ended, and for his mercy for bringing our young men safely home.

However, we soon became involved in the Korean War

in which thirty four of our young men were drafted or enlisted. We were saddened to hear that one of the young men, Donald Van Til, had been killed in action.

During this period the Mission Society, under the leadership of Henry Pluymert and Mrs. Harriet Haan, was engaged in local mission projects. Sunday schools were established in Ridge School in Gary and Ivanhoe Gardens. Regular services were held in both places by members of the Mission Society. The congregation supported the work, and Mr. Vander Kamp was hired to canvass the area during the summer in 1947.

Acting upon the Mission Society's request, our consistory appointed six men to serve as a mission committee. At its annual meeting in December, 1947, the congregation decided to engage a full time missionary, and Mr. Vander Kamp was appointed. He accepted this position and began his work in June of 1948.

In 1948 the congregation also approved the

erection of a chapel. The building of the chapel began in January, 1949, and was completed in May. It was dedicated on Sunday, May 29, 1949.

After a faithful ministry of nineteen years among us, in 1950 Dr. Van Dyke accepted a call to Ontario, Canada. Characteristically, his farewell sermon was based on Acts 20:32, "And now brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified".

In the spring of 1951 Rev. E. Visser began his ministry in our midst. There had been a phenomenal increase in the membership of our church during the preceding decade. To alleviate the crowded condition in the church, the energetic minister preached three times on Sunday. Services were held at 8:30 and 10:30 in the morning and at 7:00 o'clock in the evening. All the services were in English.

Mark Twain should have added the word "change" to the saying credited to him that "nothing is more

certain than death and taxes", for now we saw changes. In 1952 a new parsonage was built on Garfield Street. Also in that year the consistory proposed to the congregation to give fifty percent of the property value of the First Christian Reformed Church of Highland to a new congregation provided fifty or more families joined the movement. This proposal was accepted. One of the members called this proposal "bait", and it worked. On March 21, 1953, the Second Christian Reformed Church was organized with eighty families and five individuals. The meeting took place in our church with Rev. Visser officiating. Classis Chicago South was represented by Rev. J. Bult and Rev. P. Holwerda.

Both churches were now represented on our Mission Committee. In 1954 Mr. Vander Kamp accepted an appointment to serve as missionary for the Burton Heights Church in Grand Rapids. The Vander Kamp's work had been singularly blessed, and we were sorry to see them go. However, Mr. Jay Poel accepted our invitation to become

our missionary to continue the work.

After shepherding our flock for five and one half years, Rev. Visser and his family left in the fall of 1956 for Hudsonville, Michigan. Rev. John C. Scholten accepted our call and became our pastor in January, 1957.

Also, in 1957, a new Reuter organ was installed in the sanctuary. This, however, should not be construed as any evidence that now we had a permanent house of worship. At that time, with the advice of a long range planning committee, lots were purchased on the corner of Grace and Lincoln Streets. The purpose was to build a new church in the future.

In April, 1958, the fiftieth anniversary of our church was celebrated. We wish to repeat some of the words written by Rev. Scholten in the jubilee booklet. Our pastor quoted Zech. 4:6,"'Not by might, not by power but by my Spirit' says the Lord of hosts." He went on to write, "It is only what God has accomplished in spite of man's sinful imperfection that has eternal significance." We are certain that

the members of the early church would subscribe to these words. They knew that while they were saints, they were sinners, too. They did not believe that things happened just by chance. So often we heard them speak of God's providence and mercy in their lives. They saw God's hand in directing them, giving them a name and place in His Church and in the community, and in their testimony they gave thanks to God.

In January, 1958, our missionaries, Mr. & Mrs. Jay Poel, left for a new field of labor in Middleville, Michigan. The Mission Board, including members of the Chapel, now felt that under the direction of Mr. Poel so much progress had been made that Beacon Light was ready to be organized. On June 27, 1958, Rev. G. Boerfyn was installed as missionary pastor.

On Feb. 27, 1959, Rev. Scholten and Rev. Boerfyn were in charge when Beacon Light Church was organized. The church had a membership of twenty four families consisting of fifty three communicant members and

forty nine members by baptism. We were reminded of God's faithfulness in blessing the work begun in this area.

In the late 1950's the Evangelism Committee had as its goal to make our congregation more mission minded. Consequently services were regularly held in Great Oaks Nursing Home. Members of the congregation took turns in being present. Also, Christian literature was placed in waiting rooms and barber shops. New fields were being explored. The town of Highland was canvassed. Groups also canvassed Crown Point with the purpose of finding a nucleous of believers there.

Services began in Crown Point in February, 1960, under the auspices of our consistory. The church was organized on April 4, 1961. The month preceding organization, Rev. Scholten had been excused from preaching in our church in order to conduct the services in Crown Point. Our pastor was chairman of the steering committee until organization took place and then served as counselor to the consistory until the Lord sent them a pastor of their own.

News Lites, a monthly publication edited by our members, featured our servicemen in the December 8, 1963, issue. It brought home to us how far flung and global our interests had become. Of the eight young men in the armed forces at that time, one attended memorial services for Pres. Kennedy, one was stationed in Pearl Harbor, and another was to sing in the Messiah over television in Okinawa. More of our young men entered the service as we became involved in Vietnam.

During the ministry of Rev. Scholten we were impressed with some unusual confessions of faith in our church. One man in his sixties, outside of our communion, after eight months of instruction by our pastor was convinced by the Holy Spirit to be baptized and affiliate with our church. After his death, his elderly sisters also joined our church, one by baptism and the other by having her membership transferred. Later there were two more confessions of faith by elderly men on separate occasions. These confessions were unusual because of the advanced age of those who made them, and their testimonies became

an effective witness to the saving power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

While bringing messages to the "Shelter", a place which furnished lodging to transients in East Chicago, members of the Evangelism Committee met a man of fifty who had been abandoned by family and friends because of a dissipated life. Some of our families had him in their homes over weekends and on Sunday took him to church. This was his delight. Having an ailment which proved to be terminal, our pastor visited him while he was sick and, after his death, conducted his funeral. We are reminded of the words of Jesus in Matt. 25:40, "And the King shall answer and say unto them, 'Truly I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me'."

Meanwhile, plans were made by our church council for the construction of a new church home on the property located on Grace and Lincoln Streets. Early in 1963 the Building and Finance Committees began holding their meetings. In March, 1965, the Building

Committee engaged Mr. E. Eriksen as architect, and subsequently plans were approved for bids. Ground breaking ceremonies were held on April 16, 1966. On this occasion, we remember George Van Prooyen, chairman of the Finance Committee, Arthur Vander Vliet, chairman of the Building Committee, and Rev. J. C. Scholten, our pastor, each wielding a shovelful of sand. When we saw Wesley Feikema drive his bulldozer with Rev. Scholten perched precariously like a modern Ezra on top of the machine, we knew that the foundation of the temple would soon be laid.

After being known for fifty-nine years as the big church in the center of town, our congregation built a new and modern edifice on the present site. The completion of this building, at an approximate cost of $320,000, was the culmination of ten years of planning and work. Van Deel & Sons were contracted to build the new church with Norman Zuidema as foreman in charge of construction.

The seating capacity in the sanctuary of our church is 620. In addition to an air conditioned auditorium

and social hall, the building contains 14 class rooms. This is a far cry from the church built by the pioneers which had no proper basement and had only the auditorium in which to hold all the meetings. The contrast widens when we consider the first temporary church with its pot bellied stove.

On June 13, 1967, the new church was dedicated. Rev. Visser gave the dedicatory message entitled "My Church". Another important event was the burning of the mortgage in 1971 which gave us cause for praise and thanksgiving to God.

MORE CHANGE AND EXPANSION

By this time we became accustomed to having the women vote and voice their opinions in the congregational meetings. This was quite a change from the days when this privilege was solely the male prerogative. The old church in the middle of the town had been razed, and a drug store took its place. The Highland library was erected on our former parking space. These lots had been sold by our

church at their appreciated value. The town of Highland, once a mere hamlet, had become an industrial and business complex with a population of over 25,000 people. Agriculture was no longer the chief occupation of our people. One could count the number of farmers in our congregation on the fingers of one hand. Our members now became active in other fields, and many had their own businesses. Farmland had been developed into business and housing projects.

In 1975, after sharing our joys and sorrows for eighteen years, our pastor announced his coming retirement. There were many expressions of esteem for Rev. & Mrs. Scholten and when they left at the end of the year, they were assured of our well-wishes.

Our present pastor began his ministry among us in the fall of 1976. When we observe Rev. Apol in a Sunday morning service surrounded by the children of the congregation in an animated dialogue using graphic illustrations, we know that the impression these children receive will never leave them. We remember the Dutch psalms we recited in our youth in catechism,

the songs that we sang in our Christian school, and we thank God for the instruction we received concerning the way of eternal life.

Sunday and week day meetings, sponsored by our Mission Society and Education Committee, are regularly held to inform us of Kingdom activities. These meetings, held in the social hall are convivial and inspirational, and we are reminded that all of us are called to promote Christ's kingdom while on earth.

As we recall the sons of the church who were ordained as ministers, we remember Rev. Herman Moes, Rev. Arie Leegwater and Dr. Cornelius Van Til as young men. Rev. Jack Zandstra and Prof. Henry Van Til we remember as fellow classmates in our Christian school. We knew the Revs. Jim and John Huizenga, who later entered the ministry, as pupils in our Sunday School. We saw them grow up in our church. We rejoiced with the twin brothers when they were installed as pastors, and we grieved with their passing in the midst of their years.

In retrospect we think of the sons and daughters of our church who in their teaching and outreach made the message of salvation relevant. Only eternity will reveal their work done in the Lord.

It was only natural with the influx of people into this Calumet region that there would be a corresponding increase in the membership of our church. However, our members still have the old wanderlust of the pioneers. Some families have moved to Crown Point and others to DeMotte. Our young people are an enterprising lot, and the southern states have an irresistable attraction. Unlike their hardy forebears, many of them would rather go south than north. In our mobile society there is a constant exchange in our membership. Today our church consists of 158 families.

One of our members came to us from Chicago twelve years ago. We remember Mrs. Van Oost, who was ninety one years old at the time, stating that she did not expect to remain long. She was waiting for a summons from her Lord to move into the heavenly

mansions. In January, 1983, Mrs. Van Oost celebrated her one hundred and third birthday. At present she is living with her son's family, and is a living testimony of God's special love and mercy.

Despite the fact that our church is celebrating its diamond anniversary and has mothered daughter churches, our membership still consists largely of young families. What we have said of the past still holds true. Our church is still in the beginning and it is still in transition, and we pray that it may continue to be a witness of the faithfulness of God until Jesus comes again.